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Attacks on Contra manual called 'CIA bashing'

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The controversy over the so-called CIA handbook used by Nicaraguan guerrillas has become a hotly contested partisan issue that digs much further than just the manual itself: The issue is how the CIA should conduct covert activities in other countries.

Democrats, including presidential candidate Walter F. Mondale, his running mate Geraldine Ferraro, former U.N. representative Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and

An interview with Ray Cline, former CIA deputy director, on the CIA handbook controversy. Page 4B.

former CIA Director Stansfield Turner have deplored passages in the handbook which say "it is possible to neutralize carefully selected and planned targets" as meaning the CIA — and the Reagan administration — are advocating the use of assassination, with an ultimate goal of overthrowing the Marxist-Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

Another controversial passage states that "the unification of the nation is our goal. This means that the defeat of the Sandinista armed forces is our priority."

But Reagan administration officials, including current CIA Director William Casey and former CIA director William Colby, have defended the manual, saying the passage on neutralizing does not mean it calls for assassination, and that it is only one small reference in a 90-page handbook intended to instruct the Contras — the U.S.-backed rebel forces in Nicaragua — on the psychological aspects of guerrilla warfare, with emphasis on getting the people to support the guerrilla movement.

Defenders of the manual point to its overall tone as being one that does not advocate violence and, in fact, calls for kind treatment of Sandinista officials.

Administration officials and defenders of the intelligence community say the media and critics have chosen to ignore those passages, such as one which calls for "respect for human rights and others' property, helping the people in community work and protecting the people from Communist aggressions."

Another passage they like to point to states:

"The fact that the 'enemies of the people' — the officials or Sandinista agents — must not be mistreated in spite of their criminal acts, although the guerrilla force may have suffered casualties, and that this is done through the generosity of the Christian guerrillas."

Mr. Casey sent a letter Oct. 25 to members of the House and Senate intelligence committees defending the manual, saying its "thrust and purpose" was "on the whole, quite different from the impression that has been created in the media."

Mr. Casey said the manual's purpose was "to make every guerrilla persuasive in face-to-face communication" and to develop "political awareness," adding that its "emphasis is on education, avoiding combat if necessary."

Mr. Casey said the manual and code of conduct "were prepared in the political section of the FDN [Nicaraguan Democratic Force] with the help of an adviser provided by the CIA."

He said a section of the manual "deals with protecting the guerrillas and citizens when a town is occupied. There is also a section on the training and operations of armed propaganda teams, made up of six to 10 members charged with raising political consciousness within Nicaragua and personal persuasion with the population."

"Again," Mr. Casey wrote, "the emphasis is on education, avoiding combat if possible, 'not turning the town into a battlefield.'"

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But on the campaign trail, Mrs. Ferraro continued to attack the existence of the manual, charging that Mr. Reagan's CIA "taught guerrillas [in Nicaragua] the ABC's of terror, kidnapping and assassination," and she criticized Mr. Casey's claim that "the murder manual was misunderstood."

"Its real purpose, he says, is to make every guerrilla persuasive in face-to-face communication. Now, since when can you pass off murder as making friends?" she said. "When did kidnapping become friendly persuasion? ... The American people don't want any more surprises in Central America. It's time to stop the covert war in Nicaragua."

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Ray Cline, former deputy director of the CIA from 1962 to 1966 who played a major role during the Cuban missile crisis, is among those who believe the criticism is politically motivated.

"It's what I must call old-fashioned mid-1970s CIA bashing and it is aimed at weakening the Central Intelligence Agency and weakening the president who is supporting the CIA," Mr. Cline said in an interview.

Mr. Cline said the handbook controversy reminds him of the false "rogue elephant" charges levied against the CIA in the mid-1970s during the course of the Church-Mondale Senate investigation of the CIA. Those allegations were later retracted, Mr. Cline said.

Mr. Cline said the words assassination or murder do not appear in the manual, and that it really stresses Christian morality and culture. He further stated that the "real" handbook the Contras use is not the so-called CIA handbook but a smaller handbook called "The Blue and White."

"If people really want to see how the Contras operate, they should read 'The Blue and White,'" he said. But he said that handbook has been ignored because it does not contain any controversial passages.

Mr. Cline and others, including handbook critic Sen. Moynihan, say it is based on a 1968 Army manual used in Vietnam. That Army textbook, in turn, was based on guerrilla warfare principles espoused by Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh.

The existence of the CIA manual in Nicaragua then predates the Reagan administration, and similar CIA operations were advocated during Democratic administrations, Mr. Cline argues.

President Reagan last month ordered the CIA inspector general and the President's Intelligence Oversight Board to investigate the manual and to punish those in the CIA who were responsible.

White House Deputy Press Secretary Larry Speakes told reporters Saturday that Mr. Reagan was expected to receive the CIA report at the beginning of the week and act on it "within a day or so." But, he said, for security reasons, parts may never be released.

Two Democratic members of congressional intelligence committees charged late last week that the administration was dragging its feet on releasing the CIA inquiry because the findings could embarrass Mr. Reagan, but the president has denied that.

The investigations focused on the role of the CIA in writing the handbook and whether that role violates the presidential directive prohibiting assassination as a tool that can be employed by the CIA.

They also are expected to deal with what passages in the original manual were deleted, and by whom.

The original manual contained a paragraph suggesting the hiring of professional criminals to carry out "selective jobs." But that was removed along with another section that talks about arranging the death of a rebel supporter to create a "martyr" for the cause. The passage dealing with neutralizing officials was left in the final version, however.

The administration maintains that its support for the Nicaraguan rebels is aimed at stopping alleged Nicaraguan arms shipments to Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador and pressuring the Nicaraguan government into reducing its ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union. The administration denies it seeks to topple the government.

— Bill Outlaw